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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

9 September 1958

DAILY BRIEF

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I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

Communist China: The official summary of Mao Tse-tung's remarks at the 8 September meeting of the Chinese Communist Supreme State Conference stated that the Sino-American talks "would begin in Warsaw." Mao was quoted as being "hopeful" about the talks, which he said "might lead to some results provided that both sides had the sincere desire to settle the question." Peiping, evidently confident that it will be negotiating from a strong position, is claiming that all countries except the US hold that the offshore islands are Communist China's territory.

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

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Burma: There is evidence that organization of a new Communist-front party is being planned by left-wing components of the National United Front. If this organization is established, the Communist underground plans to cease insurgent activities and join it.

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Thailand-Cambodia: Large-scale student demonstrations at the Cambodian Embassy on 7 September were apparently inspired by Interior Minister Prapat, who has been exploiting Thai nationalist feeling against Cambodia. Prapat may hope to increase his power within the ruling military clique by such activities. Meanwhile, the breakdown of Thai-Cambodian border negotiations, coupled with South Vietnamese pressures on Cambodia, may increase Sihanouk's feeling of isolation which originally led him toward closer relations with Peiping.

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Mao Tse-tung "Hopeful" About Sino-American Talks

Mao Tse-tung's speech to the Supreme State Conference--the forum used to enunciate major policies--contains Peiping's firmest commitment thus far to resume the suspended Sino-American talks. Mao stated that the "ambassadorial" discussions "would begin in Warsaw." Going beyond Chou En-lai's statement, Mao was "hopeful" about the talks, which he said "might lead to some results" provided there was sincerity on both sides.

The Chinese Communists evidently are confident that their negotiating position has been strengthened. An editorial in the Peiping Ta Kung Pao--roughly the equivalent of Izvestia--stated on 8 September that all countries except the US consider that the offshore islands are Communist China's territory and that the US faces "unprecedented" isolation." Mao's confidence was indicated in a comment that US bases were "nooses round the neck of US imperialism" and that the "Americans" have "handed one end of the rope to the Chinese people."

Peiping continues to indicate that military and psychological pressures will be continued during the talks. The Ta Kung Pao on 7 September issued a "special warning" to the US against the "old trickery of stalling the ambassadorial talks," which, according to Mao, will be watched by people all over the world.

Free-world reaction to Taiwan Strait crisis: The British Government appears increasingly apprehensive at the prospect that the United States intends to defend the offshore islands, as most influential British opinion doubts their importance to free-world security. Virtually all British papers argue this, and both the Conservative party chief whip in Parliament and opposition leader Gaitskell have recently offered similar estimates of public opinion to the American Embassy in London. Assuming emphatic Labor and Liberal opposition to American policy, they believe the government may

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have serious trouble in holding its own supporters. According to the British Foreign Office, the real difference of opinion with the United States is that Britain regards the offshore islands as part of the Chinese mainland.

Indian Prime Minister Nehru presumably feels that the willingness expressed by Washington and Peiping on 6 September to resume talks on the Taiwan situation frees him from the restrictions on public statements he imposed on himself during the earlier period when it was possible for India to play a mediatory role. On 7 September Nehru reiterated India's support for Peiping's claim to the offshore islands, but urged that the matter be solved peacefully.

The Australian press has welcomed the prospect for negotiations between the US and Communist China as offering a face-saving line of retreat for the United States. Many papers are urging the government to make clear to the US that Australia does not want war over the offshore islands. In the Philippines, President Garcia on 4 September lauded US and Nationalist China's efforts to deter aggression. While not specifically reversing Garcia's earlier statement of "noninvolvement," the statement gave strong moral support to US policy in the area. Japan continues to be concerned that it would be involved in any hostilities because of the presence of US bases, and Japanese Foreign Ministry officials have welcomed the prospects of ambassadorial talks between the US and Communist China.

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

Communist Political Elements in Burma May Consolidate

Left-wing leaders of the Communist-dominated National United Front (NUF) met on 26 August in an effort to create a Communist-front organization which, [redacted] the insurgent Burma Communist party leader Than Tun is prepared to join. Though a dispute over front leadership between long-time NUF leaders and recently surrendered insurgents has delayed its formation, the emergence of such a front prior to the November general elections would bring the political orientation of the various Burmese parties into sharper focus and, for the first time since independence, consolidate the several Communist factions of Burma into a single party.

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The NUF has been seriously split since June, when it gave Premier Nu his parliamentary majority in a vote of confidence. The non-Communist Justice party and the crypto-Communist Burma Worker's and People's United parties have argued that the NUF could win through a combination of party organization and Nu's personal popularity. The youth front and the recently legalized People's Comrade party have insisted that the NUF must win through independent campaigning and ideological purity. The Justice party recently issued an ultimatum that it would leave the front unless these extremist parties were expelled.

While the formation of a new Communist front would consolidate pro-Communist efforts, non-Communists of the rival factions of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League might benefit more from such a development. Communism as such has not been popular with Burmese voters, and qualified observers believe that much of the NUF's previous election success stemmed from voter discontent with the government. An openly Communist-oriented party would probably be unable to retain this protest vote in the coming election. Further, although security force spokesmen fear that cached arms will still give former insurgents the ability to intimidate voters, their emergence from the jungle should make control over their activities more effective. [redacted]

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Thai-Cambodian Differences

The student demonstrations before the Cambodian Embassy in Bangkok on 7 September were inspired, if not directly staged, by Interior Minister Prapat. Press reports of injuries sustained by students and police, however, indicate the demonstrations became more violent than Prapat had anticipated. Prapat has recently been exploiting Thai nationalist sentiment against Cambodia and on several occasions has strongly hinted to the press that orderly demonstrations in support of the Thai Government's position would be welcomed.

Prapat may be exploiting nationalist sentiment in a bid for greater power and prestige during Marshal Sarit's absence from the country, but it is unlikely that he would attempt to seize full power. While Prapat nominally controls most of the key military units in Bangkok, it is questionable whether they would support him against Sarit in a showdown.

The demonstrations followed by three days the breakdown of Thai-Cambodian border negotiations in Bangkok. The refusal of either side to make any concessions in connection with the dispute over ownership of an ancient Buddhist temple on the border prevented agreement on any of the other points at issue. The hardening Thai attitude, coupled with South Vietnamese pressures on Cambodia, may well increase the feeling of isolation which initiated Prince Sihanouk's drift toward closer relations with Peiping.

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